Planning Series

Chutes Provincial Park

Preliminary Management Plan

Ministry of Natural Resources

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Minister

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PARK MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERIES

CHUTES PROVINCIAL PARK

PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT PLAN

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to release this preliminary management plan for Chutes Provincial Park. It establishes policy for the future management, development, and use of Chutes Provincial Park. It provides an understanding of the present situation of the Park, why changes are necessary, and the specific changes that will be made.

I encourage you to read this plan in conjunction with the enclosed comment sheet and give us your views on the proposed policies for this area. Talk with my staff in the Espanola District Office or drop the comment sheet into the mail.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Chutes Provincial Park is situated 1 km north of Hwy. 17, on Hwy. 553, adjacent to the Town of Massey (Figure 1). The Park is 448 km northwest of Toronto, 93 km west of Sudbury, and 217 km east of Sault Ste. Marie. The park was first opened in 1963 and was formally established by Ontario Regulation 165/70, Schedule 78, in 1970. It is 108 ha in size consisting of wetlands, rock lands, floodplains, and terraces. Forest cover varies depending on soil and moisture conditions. The campground area is mainly reforested with red pine and jackpine. The day use area is mainly poplar. On the east side of the river, a mixture of poplar, maple, spruce, and white pine are found.

Located in the scenic Aux Saubles River valley, it is an excellent area for camping, picnicking, swimming, and hiking. The park has 134 campsites; 56 have electrical hookups. The park also offers a sand beach, a day use area, 2 km of hiking trails, and a playground area. Cross-country skiing is popular during the winter season.

The park serves as a stop-over point for Hwy. 17 travellers. Visitors' length of stay is increasing, especially among senior citizens. The day use area and beach are used heavily by the people of Massey and area.

2. CLASSIFICATION

Chutes Provincial Park is a recreation class park. Policy for this class of park...

"will support a wide variety of day use and car camping recreation opportunities for large numbers of people in attractive surroundings." OMNR, 1978.

3. GOAL

To provide visitors with a variety of traditional day use and car camping recreation opportunities that complement the natural landscape setting of Chutes Provincial Park.

4. OBJECTIVES

The following objectives of the provincial park system can be achieved in this park: protection, recreation, heritage appreciation, and tourism.

4.1 PROTECTION

"To maintain and manage the environment of the park to protect its scenic and recreational values." OMNR, 1978.

The natural and scenic character of the Aux Saubles River will be protected. Developments will be kept to a minimum in the valley.

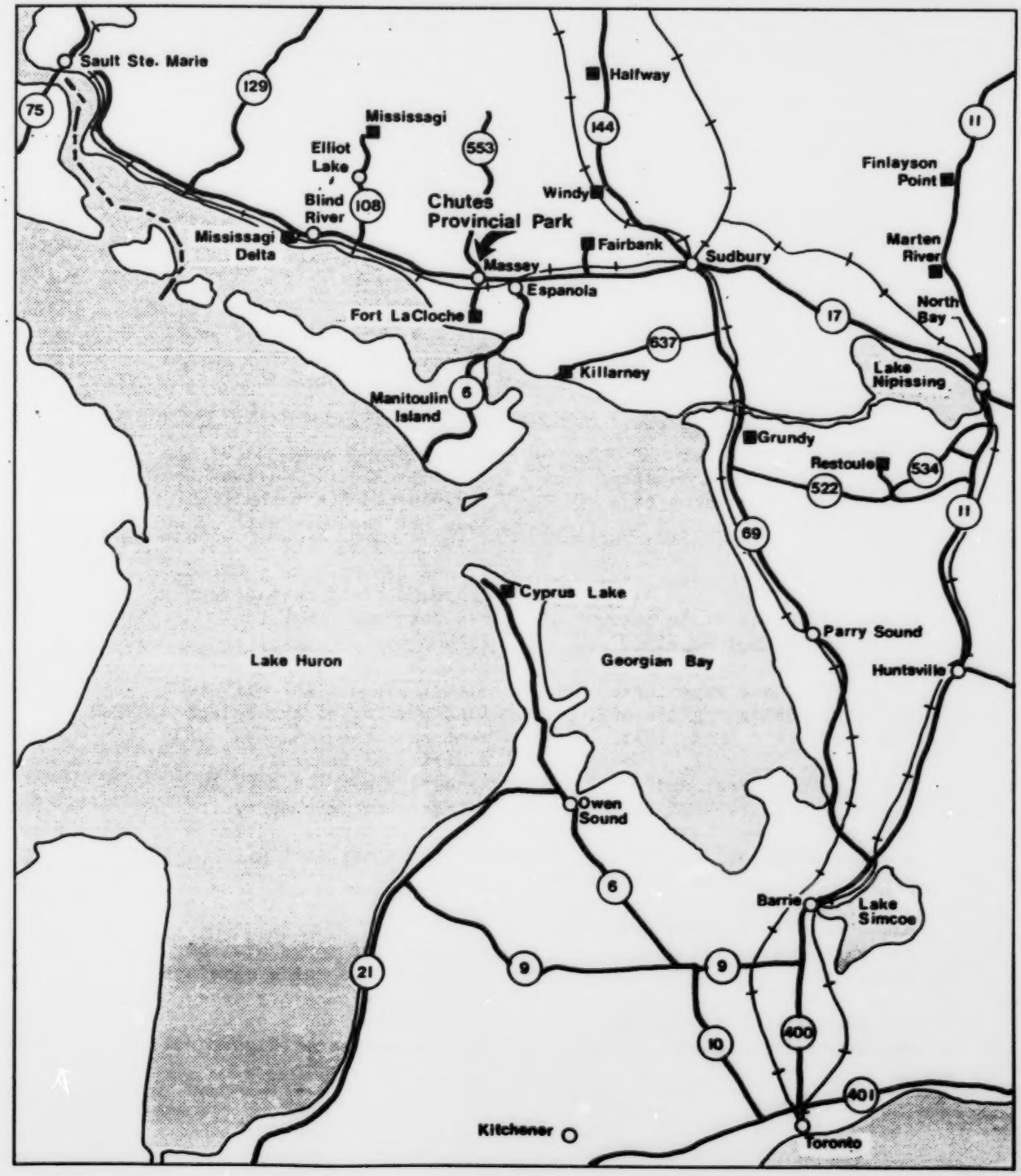
4.2 RECREATION

"To provide high intensity outdoor recreation opportunities." OMNR, 1978.

Figure 1

REGIONAL SETTING

■ Provincial Park



The park will provide an annual supply of 20,000 campsite nights and 6,000 day use opportunities.

4.3 HERITAGE APPRECIATION

"To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of Ontario." OMNR, 1978.

Chutes' scenic and cultural setting will be interpreted to present stories about the historic logging activity of the area and the forested Aux Saubles River valley. The park will use various methods, including publications like the provincial park leaflet and area brochures, self-guided trails, and outdoor displays to provide visitors with opportunities to understand the special character of this area.

4.4 TOURISM

"To provide Ontario's residents and out-of-province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the Province." OMNR, 1978.

The park's natural and cultural history will be enhanced through basic visitor services and promoted in ways that appeal to residents and out-of-province visitors who visit the park and surrounding area.

The park offers a natural setting where highway travellers and area residents can 'get away' from development. Tourism services adjacent to and within day use distance of the park, which complement Chute's services, will be identified in the park marketing plan. In this way, mutually beneficial promotion programs can be developed between park and other tourism interests (eg. Town of Massey, Massey and Area Museum, Tourist Association).

5. BOUNDARY

The park encompasses a small area (108 ha) centred on a 3 km section of the Aux Saubles River (Figure 2). It is bounded by roads on the east and west and by the Canadian Pacific Railway to the south. The north boundary includes part of an island. Some 5 ha on the island are privately owned. Proposed trail development may determine that the island has potential to provide river crossing sites. Should the private land portion of the island meet park requirements, the Ministry of Natural Resources may indicate an interest in purchasing it, should it become available and funds permitting.

6. ZONING

Two types of zones will be designated to guide development of the park: a development zone and a natural environment zone (Figure 2).

Figure 2

CHUTES PROVINCIAL PARK

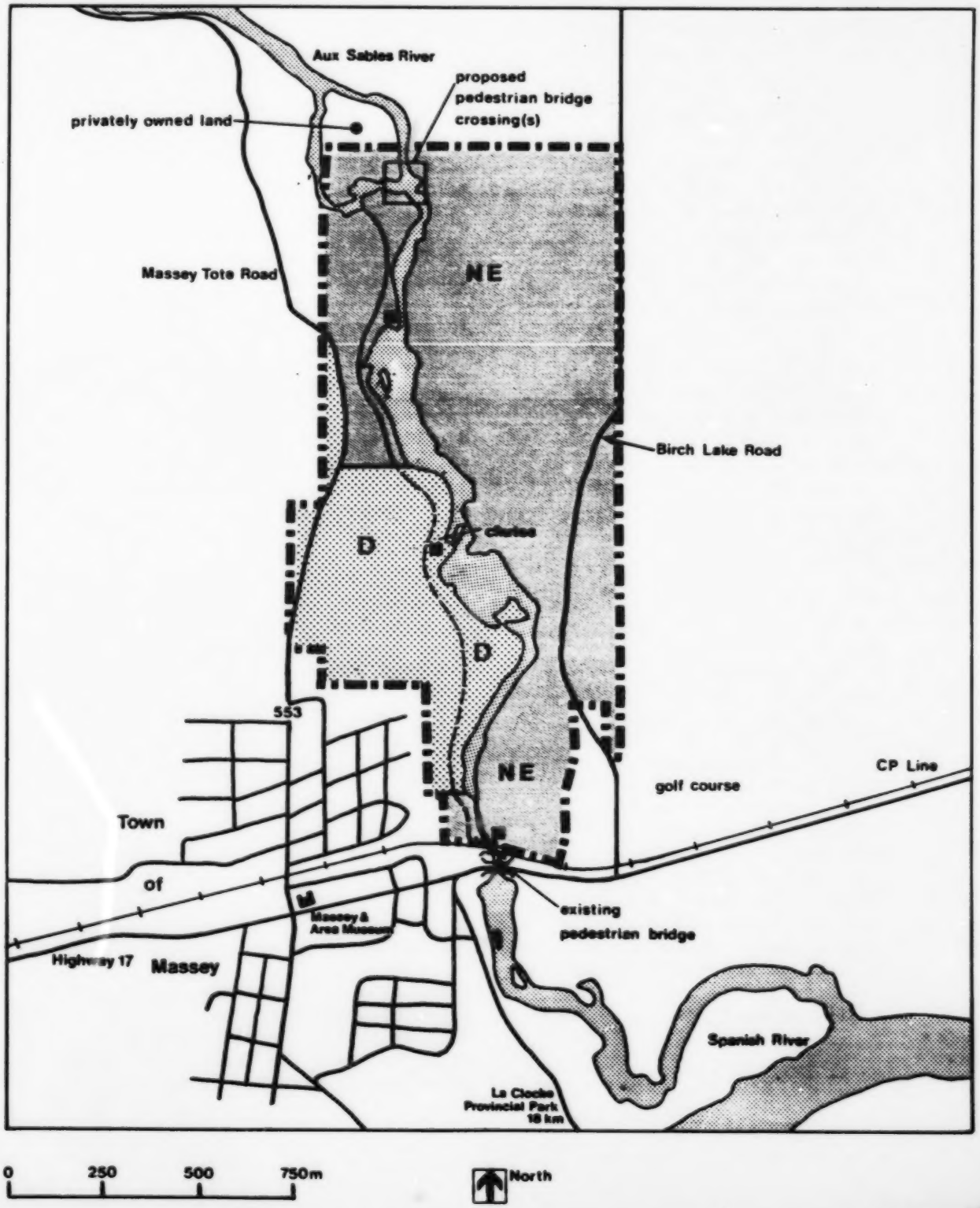
Zoning

Legend

PARK BOUNDARY

DEVELOPMENT ZONE

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE



6.1 DEVELOPMENT ZONE

Most of the land on the west side of the Aux Saubles River has been developed and is designated as a development zone. Space for a wide range of day use and camping activities is available in this area.

The campground will be maintained to supply 134 campsites. Day use parking, trails, a viewing platform overlooking the chutes, and a beach along the Aux Saubles River will be provided. A park operating plan will guide the overall maintenance of facilities. Site plans will be prepared for improvements to existing facilities and prior to the development of new services.

As well as the recreational facilities, a nursery could be provided here to supply planting stock for park needs.

6.2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

A large segment of the park will be included in the natural environment zone. Management will be focused on permitting natural ecological processes to continue. Self-guided interpretive trails, lookouts, and ancillary facilities will be developed in this zone to provide day use services for park visitors. The necessary sanitation facilities will be determined with site planning assessments for the trail system.

7. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

7.1 VEGETATION

A vegetation management plan will be prepared for the development zone of the park. Diversity of native plant species and a variety of age composition will be encouraged through ongoing rehabilitation measures. Aesthetics and campsite buffering will be maintained.

Native plant species will be used where possible for landscaping purposes.

Forest insects and diseases will be controlled if the park's recreational and aesthetic values are threatened. Ministry of Natural Resources guidelines will apply. Where sprays are used, biological agents will be recommended.

A small nursery of up to 300 trees of native species will be maintained within the development zone north of the campgrounds.

All fires will be suppressed. An agreement for fire fighting will coordinate the efforts of the Town of Massey, the Township of Spanish River, and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

7.2 FISHERIES

Productive fish habitats occur throughout the Aux Saubles River. Introduction of salmon into the Great Lakes System resulted in the

spread of these fish into rivers like the Aux Saubles. This has created viewing and fishing opportunities.

Viewing and fishing will be enhanced through the expansion of the day use trail system. This added attraction could increase use of the park during the autumn and spring.

Some fish stocking occurs each year with the release of rainbow trout into the Aux Saubles River within the park.

Bait fishing will not be allowed in the park.

7.3 WILDLIFE

A variety of wildlife are seen in the park area.

Hunting and commercial trapping will not be allowed in the park.

Animal populations may be controlled when essential to protect human health and safety, and the park environment or the health of the species outside the park (ie. overpopulation and epidemics). Where control is desirable, techniques will be used that have a minimal effect on other components of the park environment. Nuisance animal control will only be directed at the culprit animal. Live trapping or drug injection will be the normal control measures used to relocate problem animals away from the park. In situations where these measures are not feasible, problem animals will be destroyed. Any hunting or trapping required to control nuisance animals will be carried out under the strict supervision of, or directly by, the Ministry of Natural Resources.

7.4 LANDS

An easement agreement exists between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Town of Massey for a water intake line through the park. This agreement consists of a 2 m wide easement, location CL #1744.

Also located within the park is a Federal water flow check station for the southern section of the Aux Saubles River and a Ministry of Natural Resources radio tower located in the east half of the northeast quarter of Section 25, Salter Township. Authorizations for these structures exist through informal agreements.

No new utility lines or rights-of-way will be developed except for those required to service the park.

7.5 LANDFORM MANAGEMENT

Shoreline erosion along the Aux Saubles River is a natural process. Costly engineering means of stabilizing this erosion will not be undertaken. Erosional effects within the development zone will be minimized. Vegetation management and the careful location of facilities through site planning will use a combination of techniques to stabilize slopes:

1) recontouring erosion-prone areas where feasible;

2) establishing plant species along the shore will minimize the scarred appearance of slopes;

3) site planning setbacks for all facilities and trails from the valley bluffs; and,

4) controlling pedestrian circulation on the valley slopes by strategically locating shore bluff stairs to "harden" the areas where people walk.

8. VISITOR SERVICES

Chutes Provincial Park is used as a "stopover" by people travelling Hwy. 17 en route to other destinations. Features in the park along the Aux Saubles River valley are representative of a small river drainage basin on the Canadian Shield, and can be used to depict some of the area's natural and cultural history. Visitors' appreciation of this setting will be enhanced through self-use communication and interpretation facilities and services as described below.

8.1 COMMUNICATION

Information concerning park resources, management, facilities, programs, area services, and nearby points of interest will be available in the gate house and park office.

The existing brochure, "Highlights of Chutes Provincial Park and the Massey Area", will continue to be used.

8.2 INTERPRETATION

Interpretive services provide the opportunity to create a greater understanding of the natural, cultural, and recreational values of the park and surrounding area.

Park themes will include:

- logging and river driving in the Aux Saubles valley; and,
- natural history of this small drainage basin.

A 2.5 km loop trail system will be developed including additional lookouts and related facilities at scenic points in the park.

The viewing platform overlooking the chutes will be maintained with outdoor interpretive information.

Park interpretive facilities will be designed through site planning to provide high quality services for self-use by visitors. Some staffed programs will be offered by guest speakers.

8.3 MARKETING

The Chutes Provincial Park Marketing Plan (1980) will be updated to reflect a broader service for visitors to promote park and area attractions:

- Massey Museum;
- Services in the Town of Massey (eg. groceries, auto/trailer service, golfing, restaurants);
- Massey Tote Road recreation uses (eg. wildlife viewing, sport-fishing, boating, and canoeing on area lakes);
- shoulder season uses given the potential for sport-fishing and salmon viewing outside or in the park; and,
- La Cloche Provincial Park - when facilities are developed.

In this way, park visitors will be informed about provincial park and regional tourist attractions, programs, and services.

9. DEVELOPMENT

Development will proceed in accordance with Figure 3 and the following guidelines.

Park facilities will complement other services in the area. Site planning will be necessary prior to the development of new services or to upgrade existing facilities. These projects will be phased in according to the Plan's Implementation and Review section. The Environmental Assessment Act will be adhered to.

All facilities in the park will be maintained to provincial park standards and according to approved procedures. The park operating plan will be updated annually.

9.1 PARK ROADS

There are two potential areas of congestion in the existing road system; the entrance and the hill to the day use area. Congestion in these sections of the park roads can affect the safe circulation of traffic and visitors' ease of movement within the park. Site planning will evaluate the existing layout of these sections of road and determine appropriate measures, when required, to upgrade alignments, drainage, or surfacing to provide safe circulation of traffic. Hard surfacing of all park roads is recommended.

9.2 BEACH

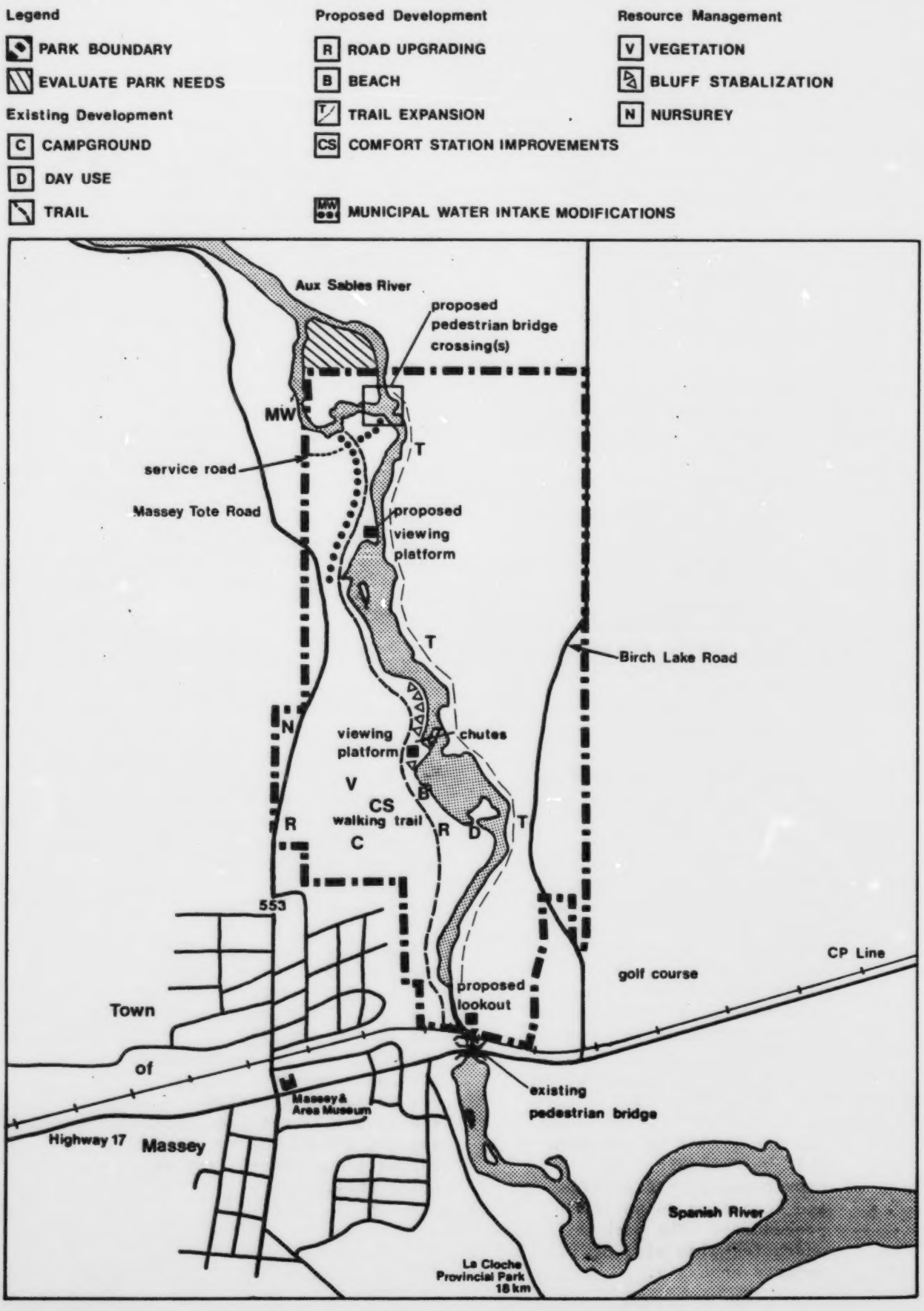
The day use beach is artificially maintained to provide a small sandy backshore sunbathing area. Crowding occurs here during peak use. Site planning will identify the potential to expand the existing beach upstream to the chutes. Elaborate engineering works will not be undertaken.

9.3 TOWN WATER SUPPLY

The Town of Massey obtains their domestic water from the Aux Saubles River within the park (Location CL #1744). The Town would like to upgrade their intake to provide more water during low summer flow periods. The Town will require an engineering survey to evaluate the feasibility of doing this.

Figure 3

CHUTES PROVINCIAL PARK – Existing and Proposed Development



The Ministry of Natural Resources will be involved in any such study to identify park values and concerns: aesthetics, water quality, fisheries habitat, and potential uses associated with such a structure.

9.4 TRAIL SYSTEM

There is a path along the west side of the river valley within the park.

Site planning will determine the best alignment for a new 2.5 km trail to provide day use services within the Aux Saubles River valley. A pedestrian bridge is required at the northern limits of the trail to maximize trail length by providing access to the east side of the river. Other improvements including a viewing platform, vault privies, and shelters for day use will be developed (Figure 3).

The old highway bridge, south of the park boundary will continue to be used as a crossing for park visitors. The agreement with the Ministry of Transportation and Communications will be retained to authorize this use.

9.5 COMFORT STATION

The existing comfort station's showers and washroom services are well used. A solar assisted water heating system supplements the production of hot water for the building. The solar heating system, which was added to the building in 1979, will be reconditioned to increase solar heating capability.

Architectural redesign of the comfort station is required before this facility is renovated.

10. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the approved management plan is summarized in this section.

A park operating plan will be updated annually.

Work program planning and funding proposals will be based on the implementation of these aspects of the plan according to the following phases:

PHASE 1: SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM PLANNING

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- develop and implement a vegetation management plan for the development zone (including nursery needs);
- establish a fire fighting agreement between the Town of Massey, the Town of Spanish River and MNR.

VISITOR SERVICES

- prepare a visitor services plan implementing communication and interpretation efforts to encourage day use and overnight stay in the park and area;

- update the park marketing plan to provide direction for joint marketing of park and area attractions through complementary tourism efforts (eg. Town of Massey promotions, area tourism initiatives).

DEVELOPMENT

- site planning evaluation of park road upgrading needs;
- site planning evaluation of day use parking needs at the Chutes viewing platform;
- site planning evaluation for potential expansion of the day use beach area;
- coordination with Massey's engineering evaluation of instream improvements to town water intake to ensure future compatibility of this facility with park trail needs (eg. pedestrian bridge);
- site planning of the proposed trail system including facilities that could complement park use;
- architectural redesign of the comfort station's solar water heating facility;

PHASE 2: LONG TERM ADDITIONAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

- road work as required as per approved site plans for:
  - entrance;
  - day use area;
  - hard surfacing of all roads.
- beach expansion as per approved site plans;
- trail system and related facilities will be completed according to approved site plans;
- comfort station renovations completed according to approved architectural design work.
- land acquisition requirements as determined through trail development planning.

11. PLAN REVIEW

Once approved, Chutes Provincial Park Management Plan will be reviewed as circumstances require. Otherwise, this plan will stand for 20 years.

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